



DATABASE Expert

Forms create problems this month, but the ever-efficient Kay Ewbank makes light work of tab controls in Access forms and fields in Form Designer. Plus, how to keep parking permits and film collections in order



MYSQL IS 10

The founders of MySQL are celebrating 10 years of the popular open-source database. Over 100 million copies of MySQL have been distributed through its website and with operating system distributions, and new downloads are averaging 40,000 a day. The next version of MySQL, currently available as a beta version at <http://dev.mysql.com>, offers new features such as stored procedures, triggers and views.

SQL SERVER ATTACK FORECAST

Symantec has issued an alert saying it has detected unusually high levels of scanning of port 1433. This port is usually associated with Microsoft SQL Server. Symantec believes this is a sign of a future attack on servers with this port open. "This activity likely represents active scanning by a malicious code network in an attempt to locate machines susceptible to password-based brute force attacks," said Symantec. Code designed to launch this kind of attack has been included in several active worms, including Spybot and Gaobot.

If you run SQL Server, ensure your system has blocked access to port 1433 at the network perimeter and that only trusted hosts are allowed access to the port within the network.

Q I have a problem with the tab controls for Access 2003 forms. When I drag these tabs on to a form, they appear only in white and I can't change the colour to match the default grey of the form. Any ideas?
Mike Ayres

A This is a design decision on the part of the Access team. The forms match the Windows XP theme, unless you're using the Windows Classic theme. You can disable this feature from the Tools menu, though. Choose Options, and on the Forms/Reports tab, uncheck the Use Windows Themed Controls box.

If you're creating data access pages, you can choose to use one of the themes installed with Access or download more themes from the internet. If you have installed Microsoft FrontPage 4 or later, you can also choose to use the FrontPage themes.

In theory, you could try defining your own Windows XP theme and setting the appropriate control to the colour you want, but this would alter the way other applications worked. Which theme setting controls the tab colour is something of a mystery. However, if you're interested in trying this, create your own theme by first changing the appearance of Windows using Control Panel, Display, Appearance and Advanced. Save your settings as a new theme using Save As on the Themes tab.

There is a workaround. It's a bit messy, but it works. It's best to design your tabbed forms first to achieve the overall look you want, then you can move on to getting the tabs looking good.

Add the tab controls to your forms, and when everything looks right, double-click the edge of the tab control so you see its properties. Change the Style property from Tabs to None. The tabs will disappear, and you'll just see the rectangle for the

first page. Now you can add your own custom set of controls for moving between the different pages.

To do this, add a rectangle to each page of the tabbed control in turn. Choose whichever colour you want and add appropriate labels. You then need to enter some code that will swap between the pages when your custom controls are clicked. Enter the code in the form's general code area. For instance, if your tab control is called TabCtl1 and you added rectangles to it called box1 and box2, you need code of the following form:

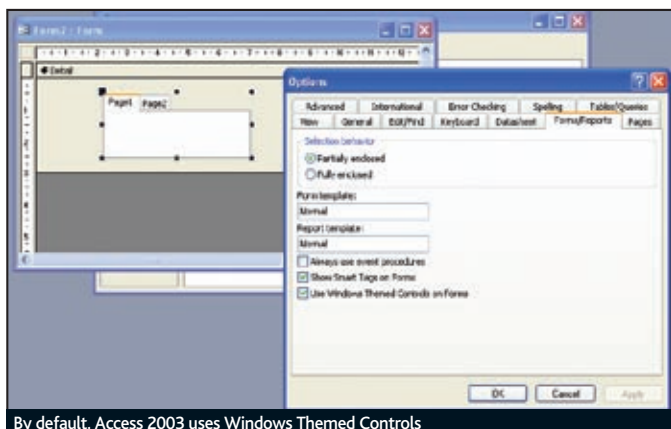
```
Private Sub SelectTab(TabNumber As Long)
    Me.TabCtl1.Value = TabNumber - 1
End Sub

Private Sub box1_Click()
    SelectTab 1
End Sub

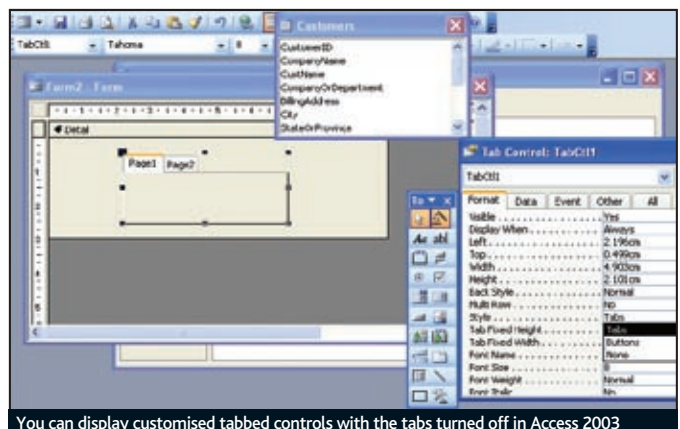
Private Sub box2_Click()
    SelectTab 2
End Sub
```

The Click event handlers for each box call the SelectTab routine with a different TabNumber. SelectTab then sets the tab control, TabCtl1, to display a different page based on the value of TabNumber. The routine subtracts one from the TabNumber, because pages in tabbed controls are numbered from zero.

Q I'm running Microsoft Works 2000 and I have two problems. First, I can create databases quite happily, but if I want to make changes they don't seem to work. If I add fields from the List view then change back to the Form view, the new fields seem to be thrown on to the form in a random fashion,



By default, Access 2003 uses Windows Themed Controls



You can display customised tabbed controls with the tabs turned off in Access 2003



with some on top of other fields, and some on top of the form labels. Second, if I change the size of a field by choosing **Resize** and **Best Fit**, it seems to work in **List** view, but in **Form** view the default length of 20 characters is used instead.

Billy Carpenter

A You need to use the Form Designer to get around these problems. To access this, go to **View, Form Design**. From here you can drag your fields to more appropriate locations. You can also change the lengths of the display areas for fields. To do this, click on the field you want to change, move the cursor to the edge of the field and, when you see the message **Resize Fields**, drag the edge to the length you want.

Q I keep details of parking permits in a database. The details of each permit are stored in a table **tblPermit**. Each permit can apply to up to three vehicles, so I have created a separate table for these called **tblVehicleRegistration**. This table has a **PermitID** field that is used in the many-to-one relationship with **tblPermit**.

Could you please advise me on how I can ensure that each permit can be linked to up to three vehicles only?

Ray Baker

A There are a couple of ways of doing this, and each has its disadvantages. First, you can add another field to **tblVehicleRegistration**. Call it something like **VehicleMatch**, make it an integer and set its

validation rule to between 1 and 3. Create a single index incorporating the **PermitID** and the **VehicleMatch** fields, and make it unique. You can't add more than three records for each vehicle registration accidentally. You must manually set the **VehicleMatch** field to 1, 2 or 3 for each record.

The second method is useful when you're entering values in forms, but doesn't protect you if users add records directly to the tables. It relies on the **AllowAdditions** property of Access forms. Create a form for **tblVehicleRegistration** that you can use as a subform of your form for permits. Then create a procedure to handle the **BeforeInsert** event of your new form, which is triggered when a user attempts to add a new record.

This event procedure has to work out how many records there are in the subform already. The simplest way to do this is to use a **DCount** operation. You could use **RecordCount** instead, but **DCount** is probably easier:

```
Private Sub Form_BeforeInsert(Cancel
    As Integer)
    If DCount("*", "[tblVehicleRegistrat
        ion]", "[PermitID]=" & Me!PermitID)
        > 2 Then
        Cancel = True
        MsgBox "You've already got three
            vehicles for this permit, so can't
            add any more ", vbOKOnly
        Parent.SetFocus
        DoCmd.GoToRecord acForm,
            Parent.Name, acNewRecord
    End If
End Sub
```

If you create a form for your permits with your new form as a subform, you'll find that every time you add a vehicle the above procedure is run. Line 2 of the procedure checks if more than two vehicles are already assigned to the permit. If there are more than two, it cancels the insertion of the new vehicle, displaying a suitable error message.

Q I'm running Microsoft Access, and I'm being driven to distraction by a message telling me a field will be updated by a query and asking if I would like it to be updated. How can I turn this warning off?

Bill Crossing

A If you're running the query from within a VBA module and you want to avoid being prompted by the warning, use the **SetWarnings** toggle to switch warnings off before running the query, then switch them on again afterwards. The routine will look something like this:

```
DoCmd.SetWarnings False
DoCmd.OpenQuery "myQuery"
DoCmd.SetWarnings True
```

Replace the name **myQuery** with the name of the query you're running.

You can turn warnings off for all queries using **Tools, Options** and **Edit/Find**. In the dialog, you'll see an option for **Confirm Action Queries**. If you untick the box, you won't be warned when an action query is about to change your data, but this is not recommended. Generally you'll want to know if a random query is about to make any changes. **CS**

FILEMAKER VALUE LISTS

Q I'm using FileMaker Pro to organise my film collection. For the **Genre** field, I would like to be able to pick a main genre from a list and have a list of appropriate sub-genres appear automatically. I only want to see the right sub-genre appear. If someone has selected 'comedy' as the main genre, I want to see 'cartoon', 'romantic' and so on. How can I do this?

Tom Ryde

A The simplest way is to create a separate table holding your film genres with two fields, **Genre** and **SubGenre**. Enter all the combinations of genre and sub-genre into this **Genres** table. You also need matching **Genre** and **SubGenre** fields in your main **Film** table.

Set up a relationship between the two tables, using the main **Genre** field as the key. To do this, click the **Relationships** tab while you're in **Define Database** view.

Go back to **Define Database** view and define **Value Lists** for the **Genre** and **SubGenre** fields in your main **Film** table. Set the **Value List** for the **Genre** field to **Use values from field** and press **Specify field...** to select the **Genre** field from the **Genres** table. Follow this method to set the **Value**

List for the **SubGenre** field to use values from the **SubGenre** field of the **Genres** table. This time, select the **Include only related values** option from the **Genre** relationship.

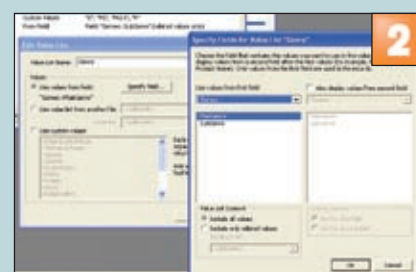
You can now edit the form where you enter film records to make data entry easy. Select the **Genre** field and choose **Field Format** from the **Format** menu. Select a suitable format. **Radio**

buttons are ideal but you could pick one of the other choices, such as **pop-up list**, if you prefer.

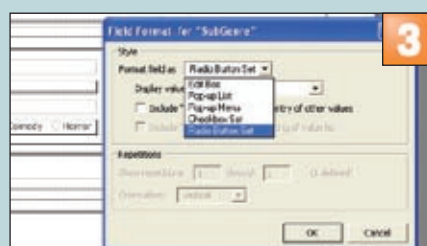
This answer may not appeal to any database purists, as it involves storing redundant data, but it does provide a simple, working solution to your problem. If other FileMaker aficionados have an alternative solution, please let us know.



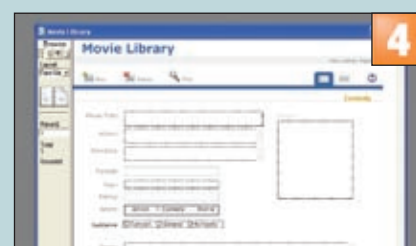
Define a relationship between the Movies and Genres tables in FileMaker



Use the values in the Genres table as the value list for the Movies table



Set the field formats; radio button is a good one to choose



The values you see for the subgenre will change depending on the main genre you choose